INCOMING TELEGRAM Department of State

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S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 SAIGON 29063

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SUBJECT: ORGANIZATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF GENERALS THIEU AND KY WITH RESPECT TO THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

REF: A) STATE 205159, B) SAIGON A-752

1. REFERENCE B WAS A ROUND-UP OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL ACTIV-

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ITIES OF THE MAJOR CIVILIAN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES. THIS MESSAGE SUMMARIZES INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO THE MISSION ON THE CAMPAIGN ORGANIZATION ACTIVITIES OF GENERALS KY AND THIEU. MOST OF THIS ACTIVITY IS CONDUCTED BEHIND THE SCENES, OF COURSE, AND MUCH OF IT IS COVERT. OUR PICTARE IS THEREFORE LESS THAN COMPLETE.

2. GENERAL NGUYEN CAO KY

A. LIKE THE MAJOR CIVILIAN CONTENDERS, KY IS EVIDENTLY NOT ATTEMPTING TO PUT TOGETHER A SINGLE, NATION-WIDE CAMPAIGN ORGANIZATION. RATHER HE APPEARS TO BE ENGAGED IN PULLING TOGETHER EXISTING GROUPS WHO WILL PROBABLY COOPERATE ONLY IN A LOOSE AND GENERAL WAY - OR POSSIBLY NOT AT ALL - IN SUPPORTING HIS CANDIDACY. WE KNOW OF NO PLANS AS YET TO FORM A COHERENT, WESTERN-STYLE POLITICAL PARTY OR MASS ORGANIZATION TO BACK KY. QUOTED HIM AS SAYING THAT TO DO SO WOULD ONLY GENERATE OPPOSITION, AND A BETTER TACTIC IS TO OBTAIN VOTER SUPPORT BY WINNING OVER THE VARIOUS POLITICAL

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PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

AND RELIGIOUS BLOCS AND REGIONAL GROUPINGS.

B. THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT KY DOES NOT HAVE IN MIND SOME ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE TO SUPPORT HIS ELECTIONS. ACCORDING TO RECENT STATEMENTS TO A MISSION OFFICER, HE PLANS TO ESTABLISH A COMPLETELY INDEPENDENT CAMPAIGN HEADQUARTERS IN SAIGON MANNED BY VOLUNTEERS. SIMILAR VOLUNTEER CAMPAIGN COMMITTEES WILL BE ESTABLISHED IN THE PROVINCES. HE VISUALIZES AS THE CORE OF HIS ORGANIZATION A SLATE OF SIXTY SENATORIAL CANDIDATES, TWELVE WHO WILL WORK AT HEADQUARTERS AND FORTY-EIGHT WHO WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PROVINCES.

C. KY HAS BEEN QUITE ACTIVE IN COURTING VARIOUS POLITICAL GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS. THE "RICE BONUS" WAS AN OBVIOUS BID FOR THE SUPPORT OF CIVIL SERVANT AND MILITARY PERSONNEL. HIS ANNOUNCED INTENTION TO RETURN CONGREGATION PROPERTY TO THE CHINESE COMMUNITY WAS A SKILLFUL GESTURE AIMED AT WINNING CHINESE SUPPORT. HE APPEARS TO HAVE ALREADY WON OVER THE MORE IMPORTANT OF THE HOA HAO LEADERS. THOUGH TRAN VAN

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HUONG HAS CONSIDERABLE CATHOLIC SUPPORT AND THERE IS SOME CATHOLIC SENTIMENT FOR THIEU, KY HAS BEEN IN CONTACT WITH A NUMBER OF CATHOLIC LEADERS AND HE IS KNOWN TO HAVE THE BACKING OF SEVERAL OF THE MORE INFLUENTIAL AMONG THEM. HE IS ALSO WOOING SOME OF THE CAO DAI AND VNQDD LEADERS. IN THE ASSEMBLY HE IS FIRMLY IN CONTROL OF PERHAPS 30 DEPUTIES AND HAS CONSIDERABLE INFLUENCE OVER PERHAPS 30 OTHERS.

D. COORDINATION OF THE ACTIVITIES OF VARIOUS GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS WHO SUPPORT KY SEEMS TO BE STILL IN THE DEVELOPMENT STAGE. [illegible] MAY KY TRIED HARD TO PERSUADE GENERAL NGUYEN DUC THANG TO BECOME HIS CAMPAIGN MANAGER, BUT THANG SUCCESSFULLY RESISTED THIS PRESSURE. AS LATE AS JUNE 1, [redacted] TOLD MISSION OFFICERS THAT KY WAS STILL ACTING AS HIS OWN CAMPAIGN MANAGER. ACCORDING TO [redacted] JUNE 10 CONVENED A GROUP WHICH HE APPARENTLY INTENDS TO USE AS HIS CENTRAL CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE. HE NAMED SOCIAL WELFARE MINISTER NGUYEN XUAN PHONG AS THE COMMITTEE COORDINATOR. OTHER MEMBERS INCLUDE GENERAL NGUYEN BAO TRI. GENERAL NGUYEN DUC THANG, GENERAL LINH QUANG VIEN, HEALTH MINISTER TRAN LU-Y, AMBASSADOR BUI DIEM, COMMUNICATIONS MINISTER TRUONG VAN THUAN, SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO THE PRIME MINISTER TRUONG THAI TON, SAIGON PORT DIRECTOR MAJOR PHO QUOC CHU, WRITER LE VAN TIEN (NHU PHONG), DENTIST PHAN NGOC CAC, AND A MEMBER OF THE PEOPLES ARMY COUNCIL, NGUYEN THIEN NHON. GENERAL LOAN MAY ALSO BE A MEMBER OF THE GROUP, BUT HE APPARENTLY DID NOT ATTEND THE JUNE 10 MEETING.

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E. ACCORDING TO THE [redacted], THE JUNE 10 MEETING DISCUSSED THE USE OF GOVERNMENT CADRES AND THE QUESTION OF "HONORABLE" VERSUS "STRONG PRESSURES" CAMPAIGN TACTICS. KY ALLEGEDLY URGED THAT HIS SUPPORTERS HAVE NO COMPUNCTION WHATEVER ABOUT THE USE OF GOVERNMENT CADRE. THE DISCUSSION OF "HONORABLE"VERSUS "STRONG PRESSURES" TACTICS WAS APPARENTLY INCONCLUSIVE, BUT MOST MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE SEEMED TO LEAN TOWARD AN "HONORABLE" APPROACH TO CAMPAIGNING. ACCORDING TO THE REPORT, KY ALSO EXPRESSED HIS INTENTION TO PUT TOGETHER BOTH OVERT AND COVERT ORGANIZATIONS FOR HIS CAMPAIGN,

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WITH THE COVERT BEING BY FAR THE MOST IMPORTANT. WE JUDGE FROM HIS ACTION AND FROM STATEMENTS HE REPORTEDLY MADE AT THE SAME JUNE 10 MEETING THAT HE INTENDS THESE ORGANIZATIONS TO BE IN THE NATURE OF STEERING COMMITTEES DESIGNED TO GIVE ONLY GENERAL DIRECTION TO THE GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE BACKING HIM. HIS PLANS AS OF JUNE 10 WERE EVIDENTLY NOT VERY FIRM, HOWEVER, BECAUSE HE REPORTEDLY ALSO SAID THAT HE HAD SEVERAL ALTERNATE PLANS FOR THE ORGANIZATION OF HIS CAMPAIGN WHICH HE INTENDED TO CIRCULATE FOR INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENT AND COMMENT.

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F. TO DATE KY'S EFFORTS TO FORM AN OVERT COORDINATION ORGANIZATION OR "FRONT" HAVE NOT BEEN MARKEDLY SUCCESSFUL. ON MAY 29, KY BROUGHT TOGETHER REPRESENTATIVES OF NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN CATHOLIC GROUPS, THE HOA HAO, THE VNQDD, AND THE CVT LABOR UNION. AMONG THOSE AT THE MAY 29 DINNER MEETING WERE CVT PRESIDENT TRAN QUOC BAU, GENERAL NGUYEN BAO TRI, KY'S PUBLIC AFFAIRS ADVISOR NGUYEN HUU CHI, WRITER LE VAN TIEN (NHU PHONG), AND NORTHERN CATHOLIC LEADER NGUYEN GIA

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HIEN. HIEN TOLD AN EMBOFF AFTER THE MEETING THAT KY INDICATED HE WOULD GIVE HIS SUPPORTERS A FREE HAND IN DEVELOPING ORGANIZATIONAL MEANS FOR HIS CAMPAIGN. [redacted] SUGGESTES HOWEVER THAT SOME OF THE PARTICIPANTS WERE IN FACT PUT OUT BY THE EXTENT TO WHICH KY TRIED TO GUIDE THEIR ACTIVITIES. A SECOND MEETING OF SOME OF THESE LEADERS, PLUS OTHER HOA HAO AND CAO DAI REPRESENTATIVES WAS REPORTEDLY HELD MAY 31, AND A THIRD MEETING MAY HAVE TAKEN PLACE JUNE 22. HOWEVER THE "FRONT" HAS YET TO BE LAUNCHED PUBLICLY, AND WE HAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT KY HAS MADE RELATIVELY LITTLE PROGRESS IN FORMING IT INTO AN EFFECTIVE OVERT COORDINATING BODY FOR HIS CAMPAIGN. WE HAVE ALSO HEARD NOTHING MORE OF HIS EARLY IDEA TO LAUNCH HIS CANDIDACY WITH A KIND OF "NOMINATING CONVENTION"; AS THE FILING DEADLINE FOR PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES IS FAST APPROACHING, WE ARE INCLINED TO THINK THAT KY MAY HAVE DROPPED THAT IDEA.

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G. WE ALSO HAVE [redacted] THAT INDICATES KY HAS BEGUN TO PUT TOGETHER AT LEAST ONE COVERT ORGANIZATION.

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NOMINAL HEAD OF THIS GROUP, WHICH AGAIN APPEARS TO BE IN THE NATURE OF A COORDINATING COMMITTEE, IS SAIGON PORT DIRECTOR PHO QUOC CHU. THE ACTUAL LEADER, HOWEVER, IS LE VAN THAI, SAID TO BE CLOSE TO RETIRED GENERAL TRAN VAN DON. ACCORDING TO THE REPORT, THE GROUP WILL USE CADRES OF TRAN VAN DON AND DANG VAN SUNG ALONG WITH THAI'S CONTACTS TO CARRY OUT SECRET POLITICAL ACTION IN SUPPORT OF KY'S CANDIDACY. GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, INCLUDING RD CADRE, AND GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATIONS WILL ALSO BE EMPLOYED. THIS GROUP WILL BE LINKED TO POLICE GENERAL LOAN, BUT APPARENTLY NOT CONTROLLED BY HIM. [ ] INDICATES THAT KY STARTED THIS GROUP ABOUT MAY 20, AND THAT IT WAS SUPPOSED TO BEGIN ACTIVITY BY JUNE 2. (ALTHOUGH THIS REPORT MAY BE ENTIRELY ACCURATE, EMBOFFS IN CONTACT WITH DON AND SUNG HAVE THE IMPRESSION THEY ARE LEANING TOWARD SUPPORT OF KY BUT ARE NOT FULLY COMMITTED. WHATEVER CADRES THEY MAY HAVE AT THEIR DISPOSAL ARE PROBABLY NOT NOW AVAILABLE TO THIEU.)

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H. [ ] REPORTS THAT KY HAS PLANS

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TO USE THE NATIONAL POLICE AND THE PROVINCE CHIEFS AS CAMPAIGN INSTRUMENTS. WE ASSUME THAT THIS EFFORT IS BEING DIRECTED PRIMARILY BY GENERAL LOAN. WE HAVE LITTLE INFORMATION ON THE ORGANIZATIONAL SCOPE OF THIS ACTIVITY, HOWEVER.

I. KY'S PLATFORM, LIKE HIS CAMPAIGN ORGANIZATION, IS APPARENTLY STILL IN PROCESS OF FORMATION. BUI DIEM TOLD US THAT WE WERE WORKING ON A PLATFORM STATEMENT, AND WE HAVE [ ] DESIGNATED VU QUOC THUC TO PULL TOGETHER, FOR KY'S PLATFORM, REPORTS SUBMITTED BY THE VARIOUS MINISTRIES ON THE PROGRAMS INITIATED UNDER THE KY REGIME. HIS PLATFORM IDEAS NOW APPARENTLY ARE FOCUSED ON THE RECORD OF HIS GOVERNMENT PLUS [ ] OF FURTHER SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL PROGRESS IN THE FUTURE.

J. GENERAL NGUYEN Van THIEU

A. [ ] THAN KY TO SET UP CAMPAIGN MACHINERY OR ACTIVELY SUPPORT FOR HIS CANDIDACY. INDEED, HE

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APPEARS [ ] LOST BY THE MAJOR CIVILIAN CONTEND-

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ERS IN THIS RESPECT.] INDICATE THAT HE HAS DISIG-
NATED A CAMPAIGN MANAGER, NGUYEN VAN HUONG (A CLOSE FRIEND
OF THIEU'S BROTHER, A SOUTHERNER AND FORMERLY ACTIVE DAI VIET
POLITICIAN) AND THAT HE HAS MET WITH SOME POLITICAL LEADERS
WHO MIGHT SUPPORT HIS CAMPAIGN. HE IS KNOWN TO HAVE CONSIDERED
FORMING A FRONT COMPOSED OF GROUPS AND LEADERS WHO SHARE HIS
OBJECTIVES AND WHO WILL SUBSCRIBE TO HIS PLATFORM. BEYOND
PUBLIC STATEMENTS OF HIS INTENTIONS TO RUN AND HIS DETERMINA-
TION TO ENSURE A CLEAN ELECTION, HOWEVER, THIEU SEEMS TO HAVE
DONE REMARKABLY LITTLE TO GET READY FOR THE COMING CAMPAIGN.
(THIS COULD, OF COURSE, REFLECT AN INTENTION TO WITHDRAW FROM
THE RACE AT SOME POINT.)

5. AS INDICATED IN SAIGON'S A-638, THIEU IS WIDELY
ACCEPTABLE, BUT THERE ARE VERY FEW WHO FEEL ANY STRONG LOYAL-
TIES TO HIM. HE HAS OF COURSE CONSIDERABLE SUPPORT AMONG THE
MILITARY, AND THERE IS SOME CATHOLIC SENTIMENT FOR HIS
CANDIDACY. DAI VIET FACTIONS OTHER THAN HA THUC KY'S

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REVOLUTIONARY DAI VIETS MAY SUPPORT HIM. IF THE THIEU-
KY RIVALRY WERE RESOLVED AND THIEU ENJOYED THE UNIFIED
BACKING OF THE MILITARY, HE WOULD HAVE A REASONABLY GOOD
CHANCE OF BEING ELECTED. BUT RUNNING AGAINST KY AND WITH
THE MINIMAL ORGANIZATIONAL EFFORT HE IS PUTTING FORTH,
WE NOW THINK THIEU WILL LIKELY END UP IN THIRD OR EVEN
FOURTH PLACE WHEN THE BALLOTS ARE COUNTED.

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